



Vote Your Values

This fall will bring an especially big election year in Minnesota. We will be voting for a new governor, two senators and a representative to send to Washington, several who will represent us in St. Paul, and others who will represent us locally.

Making good voting choices is not easy. For that reason, our weekly parish bulletins will contain inserts that explore **issues**, not by whether they are part of Republican or Democratic platforms, but instead by values that rise out of what Jesus taught us. You are invited to use these weekly inserts in deciding which candidates you believe will represent us in promoting these values. This week we will explore humans' right to life and human dignity.

Sometimes people have claimed that "separation of Church and State" means that our faith should not affect our politics. But **that's like arguing that our faith should not affect our actions.**

Both the Old and New Testament make clear that **God expects us to unite the two.** God sent prophets and Jesus himself to encourage our right thinking and right acting. We are authentic followers of Jesus only if we promote the values that God holds. Creating a world where those values shape policy and practices is what Jesus called us to when he invited us to bring about The Reign of God. For that reason, the Catholic Church teaches that **participation in political life is not only a civic obligation but also a moral one.** Learning the positions that candidates championed in the past and propose for the future is critical.

Learning candidates' positions will require an investment of your time. But that **preparation time is necessary for both good citizenship and Christian action**, especially in a country like ours with its democratic system. ***Responsible voting means informed voting.***

The bottom line: **Vote on November 6.** Put the date on your calendar now. To do so effectively, set out to judge the **candidates' values** rather than subscribe to their political parties. Why? Because ***no political party champions all the values that Christians hold.*** The best we can do is to compare a candidate's values with our own and then vote for the best match.

How do we do that? Here is one set of guidelines¹ intended to help you vote your conscience:

1. **Know your values.** The purpose of these bulletin inserts is to help sum up key values from your faith and then to provide examples of the kinds of questions that will help you compare the candidate's values with those that you hold.
2. **Know the issues.** Be informed about a significant range of local, state, national, and international issues. Limiting your evaluation of candidates' responses to only one or two issues may be easy, but doing so is neither mature nor responsible.
3. **Know the candidates.** Again, explore the range of their views rather than exploring only one or two issues. Also useful is advice from American bishops: Examine candidates' track record for "personal integrity, philosophy, and performance."
4. **Vote your values.** Vote for those whom you judge will further what you believe to be right.

¹Adapted from Bernard Evans, *Vote Catholic? Beyond the Political Din.*

We are being called to evaluate candidates' platforms so that by Nov. 6 we are ready to respond, making our best choices among candidates who we think will lead us well.

Right to Life • Dignity of the Human Person

A theology teacher in a Catholic university wrote the following quiz question: **What is the name of the woman who cleans our hallway?**

Dumbfounded—and unable to answer—students asked if that item would count in their scores. “Yes,” said their professor. **“She is as much an image of God as is any of us.”**

Learning someone’s name is part of acknowledging another’s dignity. To walk past her daily but not bother to learn even her name suggests we remain blind to recognizing her inherent worth.

Key to most of the values Christians hold is the one we are exploring here: the right to life and the dignity of every human person. Why? Because **God created humans in God’s own image**. Each human therefore has extraordinary worth.

Race, religion, skin color, education, ability or disability, gender, social standing—all these traits are additions. They **do not modify the core principle: Every human life is sacred**.

Each of us has a portion of “divine DNA” in us. Knowing that, how can any human being willingly abuse, debase, or violate another human being?

In writing about each human’s value in God’s creation, Thomas Merton, a 20th-century Cistercian monk, said:

“I have the immense joy of being...a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate... If only everyone could realize [what we are]! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun... If only they could see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time.”

Reflecting on the knowledge that **something of God is imaged in each of us**, a spiritual teacher once advised that we should be willing to bow down before every other human we meet.

Sometimes, though, what we learn with our head fails to make it to our heart and then into action. Yet knowledge alone may have little worth unless we act upon it.





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Sample questions for learning and evaluating candidates' views

1. **Abortion:** Appointment to the Supreme Court of a conservative judge has people suggesting that Roe vs. Wade might be reversed. Would you support or propose any changes to the state or federal laws to restrict abortion?
 - If yes, what changes would you like to see enacted?
 - If no, what actions, if any, would you propose to reduce the demand for abortions?
2. Black Lives Matter has focused attention on what it calls state-sanctioned violence and anti-Black racism. Do you believe there is **state-sanctioned violence against Black people**?
 - If so, what do you propose can be done to prevent or reduce it?
 - If not, what actions do you propose we take to improve race relations?
3. **LGBTQ issues:** Do you agree with the recent Supreme Court decision that allowed a Colorado baker to refuse to make a wedding cake for a gay couple? Why or why not?
4. In 2017, the Minnesota legislature considered a “**bathroom bill**” (HF 41) that would require students to use restroom facilities consistent with their biological sex, which is defined by a person’s chromosomes; transgender female students would be required to use a men’s bathroom, and transgender male students would be required to use a women’s bathroom.
 - Would you support this bill at the state or at federal levels? Why or why not?
5. Many people believe that comprehensive **immigration reform** is needed.
 - What reforms would you support or propose to the current system?
6. Within the St. Cloud area, there has been controversy about the influx of **immigrants and refugees**.
 - What should be done to assist these immigrants?
 - What should be done to assist communities that are assimilating these immigrants?

¹ <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>

² <https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/bills/billnum.asp?Billnumber=41>

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The fact of creation makes us sacred people. **We are also social people:** We need each other to become all that we can be--what St. Irenaeus meant when he said that “The glory of God is humans fully alive.”

As social beings, **each of us is called to make visible to others some aspect of the God within** that makes us who we are. And if God is love, then we need to practice loving relationships. Is it any wonder, then, that Jesus told us to love one another?

As social beings, we have two routes by which we can mature into the full human persons that God intended at our creation:

1. The first, smallest, most intimate, and most central of these routes is **the family**. Through it we are born. In it we learn our first lessons in how to love each other. In it we also learn our values for living wisely. Nourishing this core unit of society should be a major goal of an effective government’s policies and programs.
2. The second is **the community** in which we live. Community might mean a city, farm neighborhood, township, parish, school district, state, region, nation, and more. As technology shrinks the earth, community takes on an even larger global definition. Within this broadest definition of community, natural disasters and human failures in other parts of the world can reach directly into our living rooms, bringing us serious good or harm.

In addition to nourishing families, then, governments are also responsible for nourishing the range of communities that affect our common human good. **Promoting the common good is, in fact, the primary reason that governments exist.**

Unless a government keeps faith with overseeing the common good of both our families and our communities, it fails to supply the major reason for its existence. If that happens, such a government quickly causes more harm than good.

What policies do candidates propose that will strengthen families? that will build up communities? What practices would they also put in place to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute and to be heard?





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Sample questions for learning and evaluating candidates' views

1. The **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)** requires that employees be given up to 12 weeks unpaid leave per year, without loss of their jobs, to attend to family needs resulting from events such as pregnancy, adoption, military leave, and illness.
 - For an employee, unpaid leave can be a huge financial burden.
 - For an employer, replacing someone for up to 3 months also has high costs.
 - **What views do you have for how to reduce costs, yet achieve good outcomes for both?**
2. **Childcare costs** for working parents can range from 29% to 52% of take-home pay.¹ Ironically, teachers at daycare centers in St. Cloud earn on average only \$29,148 annually.² (The official poverty threshold for a family of four is \$24,300 annually.)
 - Should government have a role in assisting families and childcare providers?
 - **If so, what should government do?**
 - **If not, what should communities do to deal with these conflicting challenges?**
3. **Education:** In the past year, we have seen teacher strikes in West Virginia, Arizona, Oklahoma, and other states. Meanwhile, U.S. students score in the middle of the international pack in math and science,³ significantly lower than students in Germany, Japan, the UK, and many other countries.
 - What should be done to **improve educational outcomes** for students in our schools and to **provide fair compensation for teachers?**
4. **Disasters:** The *New England Journal of Medicine* reported in 2013 that the rate of natural disasters such as floods, storms, drought, heat waves, and wildfires has been steadily increasing since the 1950s.⁴ Hurricanes Harvey, Maria, and, most recently, Florence, have illustrated the need for effective planning and preparedness. Our local communities have been blessed compared to other communities, but **even far-away disasters have local impacts**, including consequences such as higher insurance premiums.
 - **What role does the government have to protect and support communities affected by natural disasters?**

¹ http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3_4_Childcare_support_May2014.pdf

² <https://www1.salary.com/MN/Day-Care-Center-Teacher-salary.html>

³ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/02/15/u-s-students-internationally-math-science/>

⁴ https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMra1109877?query=featured_home

Rights and Responsibilities

Both our rights and our responsibilities arise from our human dignity. **Human dignity gives me a right to life.** Created by God, I belong to God. No human, therefore, has a right to cut my life short, whether by aborting its beginning or by shrinking or terminating its middle or its end.

My human dignity also gives me the right to those things needed for human well-being. Among these are safe food and water, shelter, clothing, education, health care, family life, freedom of religion, and more—all of them rights that American Catholic bishops confirm in their teachings about faithful citizenship. A good government will not block these rights from me if I am doing my part to help access them.

Do candidates seeking offices that govern such issues hold values that correspond to these Christian judgments about human rights?

Rights also bring duties and responsibilities. These extend beyond me as an individual. They include my family and the larger society as well. As a consequence, to ensure that governments keep faith with protecting the common good, **we citizens have a duty to monitor policies and programs that our representatives put into place.** We can use several key yardsticks for doing so:

- *How well does this policy enable me, my family, and others to live by the values we hold?*
- *Does this policy serve the common good? nurture the widest range of our citizens?*
- *How do society's most vulnerable fare under this policy?*

If we can give positive answers to these key questions, our government is functioning as it ought.

If not, we need to find more effective legislators who will put better policies into place.

Our vote is our major means for ensuring that candidates fulfill the purposes for which government exists.

No political party champions the full range of values that Christians hold. On November 6 we will be asked to make our best possible choices among the candidates. To do so, we need to probe beneath the ads, the endless attacks and phone calls, and the other hype that we are experiencing. We should **look instead for the action plan that candidates urge for improving the common good.**

Leaders' political actions ought to enable all of us to become our best, most fully human selves. If a candidate can't, won't, or doesn't identify such plans, we will be wise to vote for a different candidate to represent us.





Vote Your Values



Sample questions for learning and evaluating candidates' views

1. Our constitution protects our **right to bear arms**. The original Dickey amendment requires that “none of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) may be used to advocate or promote gun control.”¹ In 2017, more than 56,000 incidents of gun violence had been reported. A bill (H.R. 4573) is now being considered by a House subcommittee that clarifies that the “Dickey amendment does not prevent the use of funds for research on mental health, gun violence, and how they intersect, and to provide for reporting on the effects of gun violence.”²
 - Would you support this bill?
 - What type of oversight or regulation, if any, do you think should be imposed on gun use or ownership?
2. The first amendment protects **religious freedom**. In 1993, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) added that the federal government may not “substantially burden a person’s exercise of religion.”³ In recent years an amendment to the RFRA has been proposed that the exercise of one person’s religion cannot encroach on other’s civil rights.⁴
 - Do you support this amendment? Why or why not?
3. The first amendment also protects “freedom **of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble**.”⁵ Governor Dayton vetoed a bill passed by the Minnesota House and Senate that increased criminal penalties for protestors who block transit, even if their protest is a peaceful one.⁶
 - What is your opinion about this bill?
4. **Maintaining the integrity of our election system** has gained increasing importance with news of Russian hacking and alleged voter fraud.
 - What policies would you promote to combat either of these potential problems?

1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dickey_Amendment

2 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4573/text>

3 <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/2000bb%E2%80%9331>

4 https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2018/05/22/top-senate-democrats-introduce-bill-to-amend-religious-freedom-restoration-act/?utm_term=.3a0e027084b9

5 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution

6 https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/text.php?number=HF0390&version=latest&session=ls90&session_number=0&ssession_year=2017

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

In both the Old Testament and the New, we hear repeatedly that **a key basis for judging societies is how well the least of us is thriving**. In the Old Testament, God tells Israel to care for “widows, orphans, and strangers.” With nothing like social security in place, these Old Testament groups were the most vulnerable among their communities; **both individuals and governments needed to take special care of them**. If either failed to follow this command, God sent prophets to warn them to return to right relationships.

In the New Testament, Jesus puts his emphasis less on law and more on love. From him, we hear not Ten Commandments, but instead Eight Beatitudes. Along with those Beatitudes, **Jesus gave us a single great commandment: We are to love God and our neighbor**.

Who is this neighbor? Our neighbor might be someone we know, Or, as Jesus teaches in the parable of the Good Samaritan, this neighbor might be a complete stranger. This neighbor might even be an enemy. Because we fail again and again to be our best selves, **mutual forgiveness—even of an enemy—is necessary in human relationships**. Matthew’s gospel records a clear message from Jesus: Jesus tells Peter that we are to forgive someone who offends us not only seven times, but as many as seventy-seven times.

Today, Christian societies try to live by the **Gospel of Love**. The Gospel of Love is based on the view that God created a world of plenty: The earth offers enough resources to meet the needs of every human being. Human dignity gives every one of us human beings a right to what we need to maintain that dignity.

Much of today’s secular society, however, lives by the **Gospel of Money**. The Gospel of Money is based on a perspective of scarcity: The earth fails to offer enough resources to meet everyone’s wants. At the heart of **the difference between the Gospel of Love and the Gospel of Money is the difference between needs and wants**. If some want more than their share of the goods of the earth—if they hoard wealth, leaving others without an adequate share of what creation makes available to us—then they are living not by the Gospel of Love, but by the Gospel of Money. Injustice and suffering result.

Matthew’s gospel is explicit about how God judges between these two sets of values: **Unless we care for the welfare of others—the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the prisoner (all of them among the poor and vulnerable)—we fail each other**, and we fail to meet the standards God set for love of neighbor. Cain in the Genesis story was judged wrong to claim he was not his brother’s keeper.

The bottom line for Christians: **We cannot be in a right relationship with God if we are in a wrong relationship with one another**.

For Christians, legislators that represent us effectively must undertake programs and policies that nurture **all of society, with particular attention to those who are most vulnerable**. Unless our legislators do so, they are not serving the common good. If that happens, government loses most of its reason for existing.





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Sample questions for learning and evaluating candidates' views

Background: Low income levels are defined as 200% of the federal poverty level (\$24,000 annual per individual or \$49,200 per family of four). According to the 2017 census records, over one-third of Americans have low income levels. Thirty percent of seniors (65 and older) and thirty-four percent of children (less than 18 years old) live within those low-income families.^[1]

1. In recent months, Congress has considered Farm Bill legislation that will affect SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as Food Stamps). House and Senate proposals differ. The House of Representatives has proposed changes that will reduce benefits as well as tie them to strict work requirements. The Senate does not include these reform measures.
 - Where do you as a candidate stand on this issue? Why?
2. **Social Security:** Social Security trustees in 2017 reported that with current levels of funding, Social Security will be insolvent by 2034.^[2]
 - How do you propose that we meet this challenge?
3. **Health care:** In 2017 the U.S. Department of Labor reported that annual healthcare spending for families increased 5.4%. Underlying this was an 11.7% increase in drug costs, a 10.8% increase in medical services, and a 3.5% increase in health insurance costs.^[3] For employers offering health insurance to their employees, insurance premiums cost an average of \$18,664 per employee, with employees paying 30% of that cost.^[4] Average annual premiums in 2017 for ACA (Obamacare) family health insurance policies cost approximately \$10,000 with a \$7000 deductible.^[5]

The present federal administration is considering restricting provisions that currently protect individuals with pre-existing conditions. It is also considering reducing policy requirements.

- What policies do you support for making healthcare more affordable?

1 <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pov/pov-01.html>

2 <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/economy/social-security-trust-fund-will-depleted-17-years-according-trustees-report>

3 <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cesmy.nr0.htm>

4 <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/report/2017-employer-health-benefits-survey/>

5 <https://resources.ehealthinsurance.com/affordable-care-act/much-obamacare-cost-2017>

Dignity of Work • The Rights of Workers

Work has dignity?

Although it helps us make a living, some people regard work largely as a job to be escaped on week-ends.

A little more thinking about work, however, can help us realize that **work is a means by which we humans can contribute to the Reign of God.** Looked at this way, work is one of the ways that we are images of God: Through work we are co-creators of our world.

From this perspective, work is not merely a “job.” Instead, it is both a human right and a major opportunity.

Work is a key means by which we contribute to the common good, both for ourselves and for others.

Our work can give us a rich basis for self-respect.

As is typically true of rights, these come with responsibilities.

Key in importance: **Employers must recognize that the economy exists to serve people, not the reverse.**

Workers have the same dignity that employers have: Each is an image of God. Workers must not, therefore, be treated as mere cogs in a machine to make money. Employers are obliged to provide employees with productive work, give them both respect, security, and just wages and benefits.

Like employers, **workers also have responsibilities.** They are obliged to treat both their employers and fellow workers with respect. They are responsible for productive work in return for their salaries. Like employers, **they should be engaged in work that contributes to the common good.**

In addition, both workers and employers are responsible to care not only for themselves but also for economic justice for others.

One of our bases for judging candidates who will influence the lives of the workers they represent is to discover how they view workers and work itself. **If a candidate judges that people exist to serve the economy, his or her view is in direct opposition to Christian values, and we need to find a better candidate.**





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Sample questions for learning and evaluating candidates' views

1. **Technological innovation** is an important driver of economic growth.
 - What policies or initiatives, if any, would you support to promote innovation?
2. **Too much regulation** can stifle economic growth, yet too little can lead to abuses.
 - What criteria would you use to decide the optimal level of regulation?
3. **“Right-to-work” laws** have been enacted in several states. These laws prevent unions from requiring all employees to pay union fees even if the employee does not want to participate.
 - Do you support Right-to-work laws? Why or why not?
4. **Health care coverage laws:** The “Save American Workers 2017 Act” (HR 3798) is being considered by the House of Representatives. It redefines a full-time employee from an average of 30 hours/week to 40 hours/week. Under ACA (Obamacare), employers with more than 50 full-time employees are required to pay for a specified portion of the employee’s health insurance. Redefining who is a full-time employee thus means changing who qualifies for coverage.
 - Do you support this bill? Why or why not?
5. **The wage gap:** The Pew Research Center reports that although unemployment is at a two-decade low, **the purchasing power of average Americans hasn’t increased in forty years. Meanwhile, top earners are earning more than ever.** Controversy surrounds the causes of this slow wage growth and the wage gap. Some believe the rising costs of benefits such as health insurance have been a brake on increasing wages for workers. Others suggest inadequate education, decreased power of labor unions, or increasing use of automation play a role.^[1]
 - What do you think is the cause or causes?
 - What proposals, if any, would you support to address the wage gap and slow wage growth?

1 <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/07/for-most-us-workers-real-wages-have-barely-budged-for-decades/>

Solidarity

Few of us grew up hearing the word *solidarity*. It is a word that some Catholics may still feel uncomfortable using. **Solidarity means that we are all “with” one another, that we choose to stand together.** It therefore evokes important values for us.

No matter what our family history, our nationality, our race, or our cultural ways of thinking, **we are all part of one human family. We need to stand with and support one another**, those both within and beyond the boundaries of our national shores.

Achieving solidarity is a major reason that St. John the Baptist Parish created a program to cooperate with Catholic Relief Services through a microfinance program, one designed to help earth’s poorest people help themselves out of poverty.

Solidarity means **we welcome strangers** as we would want to be welcomed if we walked in their shoes. It means **we promote peace** and use every moral strategy we can to prevent war. It also means **we try to bring about justice.**

Seeking justice for those we don’t personally know is the very best means Christians have for responding to God’s urging that we love one another. Achieving justice is also the major way we have for avoiding the violence and terrible misery caused by wars. Pope John Paul VI said it simply: **“If you want peace, work for justice.”** A related way of saying much the same thing: ***If you want peace, promote solidarity.***

As you review candidates for political office this fall, reflect on the degree to which they value solidarity.

- What do they say in support of it?
- What have they done in the past to demonstrate that they value it?
- What practices and policies of solidarity do they propose for the future?





Vote Your Values



Sample questions for learning and evaluating candidates' views

Background: Although foreign policy is often thought to be solely a function of the executive branch, Congress is authorized by the Constitution to declare wars, ratify treaties and approve funding. Slightly less than 1% of the federal budget goes toward foreign aid and support for the United Nations. The countries that receive the most aid that is directed towards their protection are Afghanistan, Israel, Iraq and other countries in the Middle East. The countries that receive the most economic aid (not for their security) are Afghanistan, Jordan, Kenya and other countries in Africa.^[1]

1. **Global migration:** The Center for Strategic and International Studies reports that “almost 66 million people have been forced from home by conflict” and projects that number to rise.^[2]
 - What role, if any, do you see the United States taking in dealing with this global migration crisis?
2. **Combating terrorism:** Two general lines of thought about combating terrorism have developed since 9/11. Some advocate promoting social and economic development, asserting that poverty and ignorance encourage the desperate action of terrorists. Others do not agree that there is a correlation, and cite a hatred for Western values and fanatical religious views, and focus instead on surveillance and security efforts.^[3] Psychologists studying terrorists suggest that most are “ordinary people shaped by group dynamics to do harm in the name of a cause they find noble and just.”^[4]
 - What actions do you think we should take to combat terrorism?
3. **Military intervention:** Conflicts in other countries can result in a humanitarian crisis, as it has in places like Syria.
 - What type of event, if any, would prompt you to consider military intervention?
 - What will constitute success in a military intervention?
 - How will you decide how limited or expansive a military intervention should be?

1 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-21/here-are-the-countries-that-get-the-most-foreign-aid-from-the-us/9278164>

2 https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180605_CSIS_ForcedMigrationCrisis_onepager.pdf?TQMRZLOCekX1zs_JAtBfK4Z.eKOPc8fL

3 <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/fighting-radicalism-not-terrorism-root-causes-of-an-international-actor-redefined/>

4 <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/special-report-the-psychology-of-terrorism/>

Caring for God's Creation

The level of care we give to Earth reflects the level of our gratitude to the God who created it. Increasingly, we humans are learning that we must improve our skills of stewarding the earth, not engage in practices of plundering it.

We have a moral obligation to **protect it not only for ourselves but for those who will follow us**, ensuring that it is safe, hospitable, and fruitful.

As a Native American proverb claims, "Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children." Today, our very survival as a species depends upon how we take care of the rest of creation.

In his exhortation *Laudato Si'* [*Care for Our Common Home*], Pope Francis called people around the world to **protect this beautiful and bountiful earth**. He urged people in the developed world to live more simply. This small blue planet is an excellent provider, but **it is not an infinite supply house**. As scientists have warned repeatedly, the earth cannot sustain our present level of human consumption. If we are to leave any of earth's resources to our inheritors, **we must nurture what Earth provides, and we must not allow greed or waste to deplete it**. We must also, as Pope Francis warned, end practices that are turning our planet into a giant garbage dump.

Native Americans learned and practiced creation care for thousands of years before European immigrants arrived on this continent. They respected what the earth provided. They took only the resources they needed to live, and they lived simply. As a 19th century Wintu woman observed:

"When [we] kill meat, we eat it all up. When we dig roots, we make little holes. When we build houses, we make little holes. . . . We shake down acorns and pine nuts. We don't chop down the trees. We only use dead wood. But the white people plow up the ground, pull down the trees, kill everything. . . . How can the spirit of the earth like the White man? . . . everywhere the White man has touched it, it is sore."

As you choose political candidates whose views will shape how we relate to the rest of creation, look for those who will help all of us tread lightly. **Avoid those whose policies would make the earth sore.**





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Sample questions for learning and evaluating candidates' views

- 1. Water Crises:** Heartbreakingly, 4% of Flint, Michigan children under the age of 5 have lead poisoning resulting from corrosion in the city's lead pipes. Michigan's governor Snyder said: "Let me be blunt. This was a **failure of government at all levels**. Local, state and federal officials — we all failed the families of Flint."¹ A community leader, Isaiah Oliver, said "We don't have systems in place to protect against man-made disasters and that's what we need to fight for."²
 - What policies, if any, would you promote to prevent another water crisis like that of Flint?
- 2. Environmental Regulation:** Too much regulation can stifle business, but too little can allow catastrophic conditions. The EPA has regulations for petroleum spills, but this summer it declined to issue regulations for above-ground chemical storage tanks. From 2006 to 2017, there were 2491 toxic chemical spills. Three percent of these (117 spills) affected water supplies or killed people.³
 - How would you decide whether regulation is required or whether it unfairly impairs business interests?
- 3. Mineral rights in the BWCA:** Recently, the Department of Agriculture opened the leasing of mineral rights in the Rainy River Watershed, which includes the Boundary Waters and Superior National Forest, stating: "It's our duty as responsible stewards of our environment to maintain and protect our natural resources. At the same time, we must put our national forests to work for the taxpayers to support local economies and create jobs. We can do these two things at once: protect the integrity of the watershed and contribute to economic growth and stronger communities."⁴
 - What policies would you promote to achieve this goal of environmental stewardship and economic growth?

1 <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/04/20/465545378/lead-laced-water-in-flint-a-step-by-step-look-at-the-makings-of-a-crisis>

2 <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2017/11/03/flint-water-crisis-michigan-residents-still-unable-to-drink-tap-water-three-years-later.html>

3 <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/09/19/trump-policies-flooding-worse-796327?cid=apn>

4 <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2018/09/06/usda-removes-roadblock-mineral-exploration-rainy-river-watershed>

Checking Incumbents' Voting Records

Congressional vote records: <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes>

You can select **House** or **Senate** on the left side menu bar. To see how members voted on a specific bill, select **Passage** on the left side menu bar. Finally, select the bill in which you are interested. Scroll down to see how individuals voted on the bill.

The screenshot shows the GovTrack website interface. On the left is a 'Filter Votes' sidebar with options for session (2018 (115th Congress)), chamber (Senate selected), and category (Passage selected). The main content area displays details for H.R. 2: Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018, including the date and time of the vote (Jun 28, 2018 5:27 p.m.) and a summary of the bill's purpose. Below this is a table showing the voting record for Minnesota (MN) senators, with two 'Yea' votes recorded.

Minnesota Legislative Reference Library <https://www.leg.state.mn.us/lrl/guides/guides?issue=ratings>

This resource provides links to the Minnesota House and Senate journals and to special interest groups' voting records on bills related to their interests. The special interest groups listed include Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and Minnesota Right to Life.

Proposals to Replace The Affordable Care Act <https://www.kff.org/interactive/proposals-to-replace-the-affordable-care-act/>

This resource allows you to compare various proposals designed to repeal and replace the ACA (Obamacare) with the ACA or among each other. Scroll down to the table and select three to compare. be a detailed description of the bill. Scroll down to see how individuals voted on the bill.

Click the column header to view three to compare.

ACA Summary Current Law	Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson Amendment	Better Care Reconciliation Act - Updated 7.20.17
<p>▼ Date</p> <p>March 23, 2010</p>	<p>Change Item:</p> <p>Health Care Freedom Act</p>	<p>Discussion draft proposed in Senate June 22, 2017, revisions as of July 20, 2017</p>

From the Social Justice & Ministry Committee of Saint John the Baptist Parish, Collegetown, Minnesota
<http://stjohnthebaptistparish.org/social-justice-committee/>

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